

Ruanruan language

Ruan-ruan (Chinese: 蠕蠕; also called **Rouran**) is an unclassified extinct language of Mongolia and northern China, spoken in the Rouran Khaganate from the 4th to the 6th centuries CE.

Peter A. Boodberg claimed in 1935 that the Ruan-ruan language was Mongolic by analysing Chinese transcriptions of Ruan-ruan names.^[1] Alexander Vovin noted that Old Turkic had borrowed some words from an unknown non-Altaic language that may have been Ruan-ruan,^[2] arguing that if so, the language would be non-Altaic language, unrelated to its neighbours and possibly a language isolate, though evidence was scant.^[1] He had previously suggested Ruan-ruan could be related to the Yeniseian languages.^{[3][4]} In 2013, Atwood notes that Rourans calqued the Sogdian word *pūr* "son" into their language as **kʰobun* (Chinese transliteration: 去汾 MC **kʰɨʌ^H-bɨun* > Mandarin *qùfén*); Atwood further asserts that Rouran **koʼbun* is cognate with Middle Mongol *köʼün* "son".^[5] In 2019, with the emergence of new evidence through the analysis of the *Brāhmī Bugut* and *Khüis Tolgoi*, Vovin changed his view, suggesting Ruan-ruan was, in fact a Mongolic language, close but not identical to Middle Mongolian.^[6] Pamela Kyle Crossley (2019) wrote that the Rouran language itself has remained a puzzle, and leading linguists consider it a possible isolate.^[7]

Ruan-ruan	
Native to	Rouran Khaganate
Region	Mongolia and northern China
Era	4th century CE – 6th century CE
Language family	Unclassified, possibly Mongolic or isolate
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	<i>None</i> (mis)
Glottolog	<i>None</i>

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Phonology

Features of Ruan-ruan included:^[1]

- no mid vowels
- initial /-
- final consonantal cluster *-nd*

Morphology

Ruan-ruan had the feminine gender suffix *-tu-*.^[1]

Lexicon

Ruan-ruan vocabulary included:^{[1][8]}

- *küskü* – 'rat'
- *ud* – 'ox'
- *luu* – 'dragon' < Middle Chinese *luŋ* – 'dragon'
- *yund* – 'horse' < Old Turkic: 𐰇𐰺𐰍, romanized: *yunt* - 'horse'^[9]
- *layzin* – 'pig'
- *qayan* – 'emperor'
- *qan* – 'khan'
- *qayātun* – 'empress'
- *qatun* – 'khan's wife'
- *aq* – 'dung'
- *and* – 'oath' < Old Turkic: 𐰚, romanized: *ant* 'oath'
- *beg* – 'elder'
- *bitig* – 'inscription'
- *bod* – 'people'
- *drö* – 'law'
- *küjü* – 'strength'
- *ordu* – 'camp'
- *tal-* – 'to plunder'
- *törö* – 'to be born'
- *türüg* – 'turk'

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